

Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Service

General Guidance and Tips on Home Schooling

1. Create your routine

Routines provide structure and predictability and help to reduce anxiety. They also allow you to better appreciate 'non-routine' days!

- Include getting up time, getting ready, breakfast etc. Sometimes putting on 'school clothes' can help.
- Involve the young person in the planning.
- Try planning for 'Core' activities at a set time, normally at the start of morning/afternoon.
- Make sure each day includes things that young people enjoy. These can be done as a family or individually whatever suits.
- It's ok to include occasional 'relax days'.
- For young people with an ASD it helps to make instructions very clear. 'First....then...' Explain what 'finished' looks like.

2. Plan movement breaks

- Short breaks after certain times/ activities (e.g. every half-hour, or just before lunch)
- Longer more active breaks.
- During these extended home periods, it might help to create new temporary routines, such as outdoor time, helping around the house, craft or diy activities.

3. Everything can be a learning experience.

Learning at home can take many forms, such as:

- Baking/cooking
- Sharing a story
- Watching TV programmes or YouTube clips
- Playing games

4. Manage feelings/ anxiety.

- Open-ended questions are more effective than direct questions. For example, 'I'm wondering if you're OK you seem a bit quiet'.
- Listening to the young person and showing you understand how they might feel is key.
- Acknowledging feelings: 'I know this is really hard for you just now...'
- Planning a set time for 'worrying' can help.
- Try some of the attached strategies and find what works best for you.
- It can help to have an agreed 'safe space' where the young person can go when they feel overwhelmed (see attached link).
- **Do** link in with teachers if you feel your son or daughter is becoming anxious, e.g. with the pressure of work. Try to involve the teacher in talking with the young person to reassure them.

5. Use lots of praise and encouragement

It's good to use congratulatory words such as great, awesome, well-done! Even better to add in specific words showing interest and appreciation and also inviting thoughts about process. Such as:

- 'I like the way you thought that out/ used that idea/'
- 'Tell me how you did that it looks great?'
- "Well done you've found four new examples,"
- 'You've put a lot of effort into this first draft.'
- 'How do you feel about what you've done so far? What's your next step?'

6. Plan to avoid confrontation.

- Having a routine or plan agreed in advance with the young person helps.
- Consider wording requests in a way that provides options. This helps the young person to have some sense of control and agency. So instead of 'It's time to go back to work' try 'Which of these tasks would you like to try first?'
- Limit the use of non-negotiable statements. Instead use 'Is it alright with you if...?' 'How do you feel about...?'
- Young people with ASD would benefit from more specific instructions. 'First complete number 1 to 4. Then come and let me know when you've done this.'
- When emotions are very high we go into 'fight or flight' mode. No one can think clearly so don't try to carry on a conversation. Try to create calm. Give some time and space and reassurance. Use phrases like: "It's Ok. You're ok. I've got you. Let's all take some time out'. 'I'm here when you're ready to talk.'
- Choose your battles. Especially with teens when their thoughts are so focused on 'I' and exploring their own identity (this is normal!).
- Manage your own emotions. Have some go-to strategies that work for you (e.g. deep breaths, self-soothe phrases). Speak more quietly and slowly. Lower your tone. Watch your body language. Walk away. **Fake it till you make it!** The more that you try to practice being this calm, measured, totally in control adult in the room, the more you will convince your body that you are calm, you are in-control, you have got this!

See attached list for links to some helpful strategies, activities, and video clips.

Useful links

A. Ideas for visual timetables and charts

1. There are lots of examples on the internet of visual timetables. Key search words to use might be **'kids lockdown timetable images'**.
The ones you make will be entirely personal for you family.
2. For young people with ASD it's especially helpful to have a visual display, with the day broken up into sections. You can have fixed activities such as getting up time, getting ready, breakfast, etc. Post-it notes are good for filling up other spaces.
'Sparklebox' contains lots of pictures that can be downloaded (see below).
<https://www.sparklebox.co.uk/class-management/routines-organisation/visual-timetable/daily-timetable.html>
3. The **'School Closure Toolkit'** developed by the Illinois partnership is another good source of pictures and ideas. This is a toolkit that has been developed for children with autism to use during the COVID-19 school closures. However it is a valuable resource that can be used to support parents to structure any child's day at home.
http://l.ead.me/bbTE3n?trackSharing=1&fbclid=IwAR1hah84nonxVeg47As8inEHwxxQJLkpxE8NPJhZ_uGyFyC-erUM5G40eZw
4. **'Priceless Parenting'** is great source of free printable charts for children and parents.
<https://www.pricelessparenting.com/chart-for-kids>

B. Calming and Mindfulness Ideas

1. **Mindfulness or Calm down jars.** The idea is that when you are feeling anxious, or upset, your mind/thoughts/emotions are swirling around. Just like the glitter in the jar when you shake it up. Sitting and watching the glitter as it settled helps to settle your thoughts feelings and emotions – it helps to create calm.

You need:
a clear container with a lid
some glitter (some people adds stars or beads)
water with something to make it slightly viscous such as clear glue, or baby oil (optional),
some food colouring (optional).
Experiment to find the best method for you.

<https://heartmindkids.com/how-to-make-a-glitter-jar-for-mindfulness/>

C. Supporting Anxiety

1. General **article about worrying** and what you can do about it.
<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/how-to-stop-worrying.htm>
2. Using **'if... then'** to reduce worry.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-lun4WtF3o>
3. 5 simple strategies for **managing anxiety** (including breathing exercises)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp_LCrZRINE

Short video clips for younger kids on managing anxiety:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=tQrWZL0ZMp0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=tBjeO9hpTxQ>

4. Creating a '**calm**' box.

Louise Bomber

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gr7j90fxDtI>

Young minds self-soother box

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/how-to-make-a-self-soothe-box/>

5. **Breathing.**

There are many different types of deep breathing you can do. Find the one you like.

Box breathing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYytiS0ymZg>

Breathing – cards for kids

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/public/renfrewshireedpsych/uploads/sites/2916/2020/03/26183725/Calm-Down-Brain-Break-Breathing-Exercise-Cards.pdf>

6. Safe Space at Home Guidance leaflet

<https://www.thirdspace.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NAIT-Staying-at-Home-Safe-Space-Guidance.pdf>

7. Fun and boredom buster activities

1. Step-by-step **drawing** guides:

<https://www.sparklebox.co.uk/previews/8201-8225/sb8222-how-to-draw-a-dog-instructions.html>

Instructions for how to draw: a frog, a car, a fish, a cat, a dog, a truck, a butterfly, a polar bear, a sheep and many more:

<https://www.sparklebox.co.uk/topic/creative-arts/art-and-design/how-to-draw.html>

2. Lots of **activities** below for younger kids but also ideas and fun for all the family.

<https://www.widgit.com/resources/popular-topics/index.htm>

3. **Learning through play** contains ideas for activities too (copy+paste link).

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/public/renfrewshireedpsych/uploads/sites/2916/2020/05/05115310/Play-ideas-for-home-learning-V5.pdf>

8. Other useful websites:

<https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/supporting-your-childs-mental-health-during-coronavirus>